

Kent County Report

Keeping Criminals Off Our Streets

Long-time Prosecutor Bill Forsyth to Retire in 2016



After more than four decades of prosecuting some of the most heinous crimes in Kent County, Prosecutor Bill Forsyth is retiring at the end of the year. He has tried more than 150 felony jury trials, of which 35 were murder cases. He started serving as Kent County's Assistant Prosecutor in 1976, and in 1987 became Chief Prosecutor for the County.

Bill majored in history and economics at Albion College, and attended law school at the University of Detroit. "My Dad had dropped out of Michigan State to enlist in the Army at the outset of World War II and he always regretted that he did not finish school; rather, he came back to Standish and went into the hardware business. I was always convinced that aside from providing him cheap labor, he wanted me to work in the store to convince me that I did not want to run a hardware store when I grew up!" Bill laughs. "He is the one who encouraged me to go to law school after graduating from Albion."

One of Bill's top accomplishments: building of the Victim-Witness Program, which has grown from an office of one to an office of nine. "Services offered to victims of crime include an explanation of the criminal justice system, an explanation of a victim's rights within the criminal justice system, assistance in applying for Crime Victim's Compensation, case status information, and assistance with the return of stolen property," Bill notes. "From the County's perspective, it is also one of the most beneficial programs that we fund." In 2001, Bill received the "Outstanding Advocate" Award from the Michigan Crime Victim's Foundation.

Bill says he appreciates working with the most talented group of prosecutors in the state. "They are not only dedicated and hardworking but, more importantly, they are fair, ethical and honest," he says. "I have also been

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We are Hiring!

Work for more than a paycheck. We serve residents from public safety to property records to much more. Kent County has job openings for people who have the desire to serve the public and make our communities thrive!

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Check out:

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2016 Legislative Priorities Set

~ From Your Commissioners

Every year, the Kent County Commissioners determine the items they feel are critical for the Michigan Legislature to address. This year sees eight new priorities and the continuation of a dozen concerns from 2015.

911 Surcharge Transparency: Kent County supports any and all efforts to require telecommunications carriers to report on an annual basis funding collected from the 911 dispatch surcharges levied on all telecommunications, cell phones, VOIP devices. Currently, there is no system for audit or accounting of funds.

CMH General Funds: Kent County must protect the interests of our mental health programming and services in the uncertainty of understanding what might happen with the Lakeshore Regional Partners.

Public Act 269 of 2015: Kent County urges the repeal of Section 57 of PA 269 of 2015, which prohibits local units of government from discussing ballot issues 60 days before an election. The law is also facing a Constitutional challenge in Federal Court.

District Court Judgeships: Kent County endorses efforts for the State to review the distribution of workloads among District Court judges.

Juveniles – Definition of Age: Kent County is opposed to changing the definition of “juvenile” to include 17-year-olds until there has been a comprehensive review of the potential cost impact and a commitment to hold counties harmless for additional expenses.

Kent School Services Network (KSSN): Kent County supports expansion of KSSN services to help at-risk youth in the schools once coaches are placed in schools that are currently waiting to receive them.

Probate Court Mental Commitments: Kent County urges the State to enable county probate courts to be reimbursed for costs associated with mental commitments taking place within a medical or psychiatric facility located in a County, regardless of the residency of the individual.

Ongoing Issues: These items were not resolved in 2015, and are once again on our priority list for this year.



1. Capture of Designated Millages/Opt-Out of Tax Capture Districts
2. Court Funding/Fees
3. Inmate Medical Expenses
4. Probate Court Inventory Fees
5. Regionalization Opt-Out for Four Large Counties (includes Kent County)
6. Revenue Sharing
7. Sentencing Reform
8. Unfunded Mandates
9. Veterans Legislation that Clarifies Role of Veterans' Affairs Committee

Kent County Cares: Flint Water Drive Delivers

The staff in Kent County has watched as our friends in Flint struggled to get clean water due to lead contamination. Several employees reached out to the Administrator's Office, Human Resources, the Sheriff Department and other agencies with the same questions: "What can we do? What should we do?" After conversations with the Flint City Administrator's Office and several organizations, the immediate need was clear: residents still need clean water for drinking, cooking and in some cases, bathing. February 11, County staff kicked off a water drive along with staff from Gerald R. Ford International Airport, the Kent County Road Commission, Kent District Library, Network180 and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Meijer offered 2.5 gallon jugs for a generous discount to County staff. Staff raised \$5300; enough to purchase 6000 gallons of water and donate \$1300 for crisis response! Food Bank of Eastern Michigan picked up a large portion of the water on March 5, 2016. Staff delivered the remaining portion of water at Greater Holy Temple Church on Flint's North End, where cars were lined up to pick up water, filters and foods high in iron, calcium and vitamin C (to counteract the effects of lead).



Clockwise from top: Wayman Britt, Assistant County Administrator, discusses delivery with Matt from Food Bank; pallets ready for delivery; drop-off at Greater Holy Temple Church; cars await pick-up; Al Jano (Facilities) with Jay Britt, Wayman Britt, Lisa LaPlante (Communications) discuss crisis with Sandra Jones (Pastor's wife); Al Jano delivers water.

Prosecutor Bill Forsyth to Retire, *continued*

privileged to have worked with the finest law enforcement agencies in the state. I have a profound respect for those who risk their lives so that our communities are a safe place to live, work and raise our families." He also credits an amazing support staff for the success of the office, especially Office Administrator, Nadine Schut. "I have repeatedly said over the years that this office would run just fine without anyone of us (including me) with one exception: Nadine," he says. "Her knowledge of our computer programs, budget and grant applications make her nearly irreplaceable."

Bill has set his sights on a higher goal in the next year: to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro. "Dr. Douglas Mack (former director of the health department) got me into hiking and climbing a number of years ago and I would like to accomplish a few more hikes/climbs while I still am able," Bill smiles. "Aside from Kilimanjaro, the other goal is to hike rim to rim in the Grand Canyon."

Bill has been married for 42 years to Joanne, who holds her Masters in Social Work and worked for Kent County Community Mental Health, the Godwin Heights School District and the Grand Rapids School District. They have 2 children; Andrea, 40, and David, 37. Andrea is an attorney and lives in East Grand Rapids with her husband and three children; two boys, five & three, and a daughter, 18 months. David works for a recruiting firm in Boston and is married; they have a three year old daughter and are expecting their second child in September.

Diversity and Inclusion Matter

Kent County supports
diversity and inclusion in
our workforce.

The Kent County Health Department in conjunction with Strong Beginnings and Healthy Kent is offering workshops to help engage the community in learning through dialogue about improving community health.

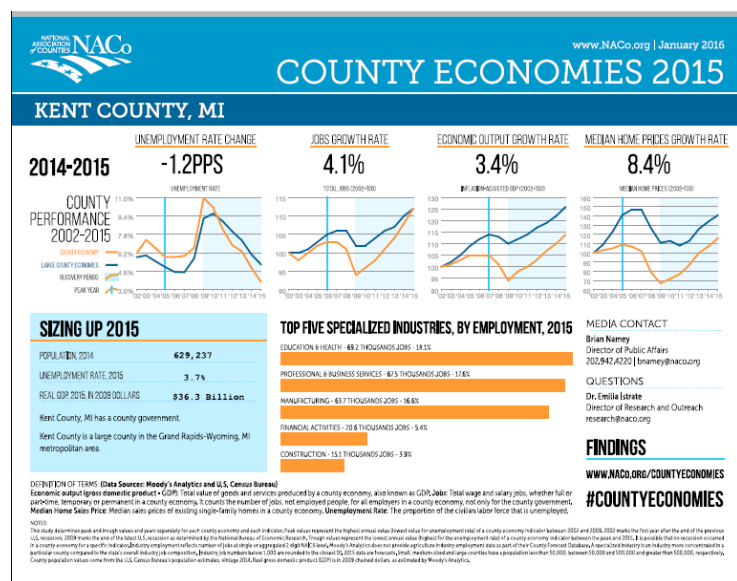
These two-day workshops
are free and open to the
public.

Learn more at:

accessKent.com/HealthEquity

Kent County Continues to Lead in Recession Recovery

The National Association of Counties (NACo) recently released a new County Economies 2015 report. It includes data profiles for each of the 3,069 county economies. NACo analyzed economic data, analyzing annual changes of four economic performance indicators: economic output (GDP); employment; unemployment rates; and home prices. Only three counties in Michigan showed improvement on all four indicators: Kent, Ottawa and Barry Counties. The report found Kent County boasted 4.1 percent job growth and 8.4 percent median home price growth in the County since 2002. For 2015, the unemployment rate was 3.7 percent. To take a closer look at Kent County results, [click here](#).



Kent County Board of Commissioners' & Administrator's Office

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Kent County Mission Statement

The mission of Kent County government is to be an effective and efficient steward in delivering quality services for our diverse community. Our priority is to provide mandated services, which may be enhanced and supplemented by additional services to improve the quality of life for all our citizens within the constraints of sound fiscal policy.